

TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

Grateful for the Gospel #2

1 Thessalonians 1:2-4

GraceLife: October 2, 2011

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Welcome to GraceLife. It is a delight to be a pastor at GraceLife. I know that many of you are going through serious trials and challenges either in your family or with your health and all of that. I have a list I am carrying with me of the number of close friends and people in GraceLife that are dealing with really serious cancer, and it is with those trials that I bring this message that I trust would be a word of encouragement to you.

The Bible talks at length about the responsibility of Christians to be thankful. Ephesians 5:20 says that we ought to:

always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

And Colossians 3:17 says:

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

And 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says:

In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

And when you consider the depths of trials that we go through in this life, it is sometimes a little bit incongruent to have the trials on the one hand and a thankful attitude on the other hand. Really I think the resolution to that dilemma and how we cultivate a thankful heart is to have it clear in our minds exactly what it is that we are thankful for because it is not always to be the external circumstances of this life. Quite frankly, it is quite often not going to be that at all.

But what is true for each one of us as believers in Christ, the unchanging, the eternal, the immutable grounds of our gratitude to God is that we are grateful for the Gospel. WE are grateful for the gospel and all that it means and all that it represents, from eternity past to eternity future and all points in between. We are grateful for the gospel for what it says about our God and about our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. We can't call people to be thankful in a way that it does not look up. We can't call people to be thankful in a way that it is not vertical in dimension, that is not soteriological in its focus because the waves of trials sometimes pull us

under. But the grounds of the gospel are the grounds that we always find gratitude and the more that we cultivate our understanding of the grounds for gratitude in the gospel, the better fortified we are to be grateful, to be thankful, to triumph over whatever this life brings to us.

Last time I was in GraceLife, I taught out of 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1 and I want to go back to that passage to kind of complete what I started—I think it was three weeks ago. So turn in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1 with these things in mind. And I just trust the Lord and I'm confident in His word that this is going to be very encouraging to you, this is going to lift your spirits and remind you of why you can be grateful no matter what present circumstances may be. 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1 beginning in verse 2 says this:

We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Now, I'm going to do a little bit of review from what I said last time. Ultimately, what we are going to see today, we are going to find seven reasons for our gratitude in Christ, seven ways that the gospel should make us grateful. What is so wonderful about this is that it is all transcendent, it is all disconnected as is were in one sense, it is disconnected from the status of our earthly lives in the sense that it is independent of our earthly circumstances. And yet at the same time, while it transcends our earthly circumstances, what I really want you to understand is that it informs our earthly circumstances in a way that changes our perspective and makes us grateful people.

Now having said that, I want to be quick to say, I want to hasten to say, when I talk to some of you and when I hear you expressing gratitude to God even though cancer is ravaging your body and you are not sure if you are going to be here six months from now or not, that is a great testimony to Christ and it is a great encouragement to your pastor. And I see that you are living these things out already and it is a blessing to my heart. Some of you I know are under the weight of trials right now and you need this to help you and to have the Lord lift this up, but that is exactly what we are going to see is that we consider the gospel in detail. Remember, what the gospel says about our God it lifts our hearts up to gratitude, it lifts our hearts up to praise.

And so let me start with a couple of quick points of review and then we are going to get in to this entire text here this morning.

First of all, why are we grateful for the gospel? Why is it that we are filled with gratitude that is independent and transcendent of our circumstances?

1. The Gospel Transforms Lives

Look at verse 2 with me, verses 2-3 here. Paul says: “We give thanks to God...” Stop there. That is the controlling theme of this entire chapter. Paul in this entire chapter from verse 2 to verse 10 is giving thanks to God, he is expressing the kind of gratitude that exemplifies the true Christian when he is at his best. The true Christian, when she is truly understanding and reflecting on and has her mind anchored in gospel truth. This leads to gratitude, it leads to a giving of thanks to God in a transcendent way. And so everything that we see in verses 2-10 is designed to express in that context the reason that Paul was grateful. When we see and understand as believers in Christ Paul’s reason for gratitude, we have the exact same reasons to be grateful that the inspired apostle had when he wrote this letter some 2000 years ago. Look at verse 2 with me again, “We give thanks to God...” That where all of us in this room are orienting our thoughts, this is the goal to which we are all aspiring in this coming hour is to be like Paul and give thanks to God no matter what. He says:

We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.

Paul is viewing them through the lens of the gospel. He is viewing them through the lens of the glorified Christ—in His presence, in the presence of our God and Father. And what he is expressing gratitude for is their transformed lives. He says, I see the work of your lives that faith has produced, I see the labor to the point of exhaustion that your love has produced in your lives. I see the steadfastness of hope that you have as you look to the future and I know that that’s the result of the fact that you have truly been redeemed, that Christ has saved you. And flowing out of that work of the gospel I see the transformation in your lives.

We looked at that more three weeks ago. I’m just doing it by way of review here. Look around you in this room. Look at the people around you, those that you know, those that you know something of their testimony and the element of their testimony that Christ has changed their lives. Look at the fruit of your own life as a believer and say, “O, I remember five years, ten years, 25 years, 50 years.” (For some of you, I’ll stop there.) You step back and take a macro look at your life and remember, “You know what? Christ has changed my life. I’m not the angry, vengeful, sinful man I used to be. The gospel has transformed my life and I’m in a room with people where the gospel has transformed their lives. This is real, no matter what the secular media may say, I haven’t believed in fables and myths, I believe in the true gospel and it has changed my life and it has changed lives of the people around me—I give thanks to God for that. Because if the gospel has a transforming power that cannot be explained by natural means, it has a transforming power in the lives of people, I see it at work in the lives of those around me. I have seen it at work in my life for years and years now and I give thanks to God.”

The way that you need to process that in your mind, to go from that observation to the point of gratitude that the Bible calls you to is to remember that when you see the visible fruit of the

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gospel like that, trace back in your mind to the invisible source of the change. God has appointed the gospel to save us from our sins and to transform our lives here on earth and we work our way back from the visible fruit to see the invisible root of that. God has been gracious, God has been loving, God has set His eternal affection on us in a way that cannot change, it has transformed our lives, it has secured our eternity and we are so grateful to Him. That is why we are grateful to the gospel, that is how you can live a life of gratitude is to remember that, that the power behind the transforming affect of the gospel is rooted in the God of the universe Himself, that holy righteous loving gracious magnificent God has worked in your life by name. That's the reason to give thanks.

Secondly, again by way of review:

2. The Gospel Magnifies God's Love

Look at verse 4 with me. He is giving thanks for all of you in verse 2, and he says in verse 4, giving thanks for all of you because I know brothers, beloved by God. Christians understand that God's love is operative in salvation and they thank Him for it. We have to remember, we have to understand, and I'll go in to this more in the third point, you have to remember the starting point of your life as before you were in Christ. You were born in to sin, you were by nature a sinner, you were by nature alienated from God. There was nothing in you that longed for God in a genuine sincere way. You had no ability to redeem yourself from your miserable, sin-slaved condition, there was nothing that you could do. And Jesus said that men loved the darkness rather than the light and so they don't come to God in the first place. We have to remember that, we have to think theologically about our lives if we want to be grateful. And so we start there and say, "Not only was I lost and liked it that way, I didn't want to be liberated from my sin, I gloried in my sin," you say to yourself. "And yet, I was in a place of condemnation there, I was on a path to eternal destruction. I was an enemy of God and under His wrath and I couldn't do anything about it. I was miserably helpless to redeem myself, to save myself. I had no power to save myself."

And how is it now, here is the question, here is the transitional thought, here is how you become grateful, here is how you give thanks. "How is it that now I stand in a secure relationship with Christ? How is it now that I have the certainty of forgiveness of my sins? How is it now that I have been forgiven? How is it that now the scripture says to me that your sins have been removed from you as far as the east is from the west, that they have been buried in the bottom of the sea and God holds them against you no more? How can that be?"

It wasn't because you earned it. It wasn't because the Catholic rituals you went through suddenly kicked in and caused God to take notice of you. No, no. It wasn't anything that we did. 1 John 4:19:

We loved because (what?) He first loved us...

The motivating, initiating cause of you enjoying this Christian life and having the Christian hope is rooted in the eternal love of God. He loved you, not vice versa. And what that does is it

immediately demolishes your pride and enables you to look up with gratitude to a holy God and say, “You sent your love and affection upon me when I didn’t deserve it. You ransomed me, you redeemed me out of the slavery so that I can become a child of God and you did that for your own glory as an expression of your love to me.”

I never get tired of reminding you of what Paul said in Galatians 2:20 that Christ loved me and gave Himself up for me. The glory of this my Christian friends, the glory that should thrill your soul is that it is an individual love by name that God has set upon you. I may not know some of your names off hand, God knew you by name from eternity and said, I will set my love on that one. And now as you are in Christ, you are the recipient of that love, you are beloved by God and you stand in a relationship with Him that can never be shaken. The work that He has begun in you, He will finish and perfect until the day of Christ Jesus—an eternal, unbreakable bond of love that God has set upon His own. And if you are in Christ, you are a recipient of that, you are beloved by God just like Paul said that Thessalonians were beloved by God.

A true Christian, when he is thinking rightly, when he separates himself from his earthly circumstances and thinks about his salvation, rightly thinking, rightly understood, goes back and sees that God’s love was operative in salvation, God was gracious, God was merciful, what do you do in response to that? God, thank you. I like the song that we sing in the main service quite often, “Your blood has washed away my sin, Jesus thank you.” Thank you from the bottom of my heart. The gospel makes you grateful because it highlights God’s love.

Now, those first two points have been by way of review. If you want the CD, you can probably find it on line or back here at the table. But let’s move on in to the rest of the passage here and see some of these other things which cause Paul to give thanks which applies to us as well.

Thirdly, it is not just that the gospel transforms lives, it is not just that the gospel magnifies God’s love, but:

3. The Gospel Magnifies God’s Sovereignty

As Paul continues in his thanksgiving here in verse 4, he traces the source of their salvation back to God’s electing choice in the lives of the Thessalonians. Look at verse 4. Let me say that again. Paul traces the source of their salvation back to God’s choice of them. Look at verse 4, he says as plain as day, he says, I give thanks to you because I know brethren, beloved by God, His choice of you. You were the object of God’s choice. It was not that God was the object of your choice, you were the object of His choice, that difference changes everything. This word for choice here, “God’s choice of you” is a word referring to His election of us to salvation, it always refers to the divine choice of someone, not the other direction.

And so this reminds us that salvation originated in the will of God not in the will of man. Your salvation originated in God’s will not yours. Because if it had been left up to you in the bondage of your will to sin, you never would have come to Christ in the first instance—you never would have done that. And so when your heart was moved toward faith in Christ, understand that that came because God had made a prior choice of you and He had worked in your heart to move you

in that direction. He pulled you as it were, He drew you as it were to come and that is a reflection of His free sovereign will in order to do that.

We love, as I said earlier, because He first loved us. It was God's sovereign purpose and that lifts us out of our pride, it lifts us out of our despair, it lifts us beyond our circumstances in to a revealed realm of glory that is only known through the scriptures. A revealed realm of the sovereign purpose of God to save the people for Himself and in His free and uninfluenced will, He brought you by name in to His realm. I love Him, don't you? I can't do anything, I'm thinking about this rightly. Look, you wouldn't, you might not know this, but I'm capable of being kind of grumpy. I'm like you, I get grouchy. But when we think about these things rightly, we realize how unjustified those kinds of attitudes and dispositions are—that's the point. We have to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, we have to bring our minds back to what scripture says. We have to elevate our minds to this realm that is real, this realm that governs our salvation and realize that God has been sovereign and he has drawn us to Himself. It makes us thankful, it makes us grateful because remember, the reason that you are so grateful is that you realize that if God hadn't done that, you would have been lost, you could not have saved yourself. And so the gospel magnifies the sovereign work of God, the sovereign will of God and shows Him to be the great and free and uninfluenced God that He is. No one taught Him anything, no one forced Him to save you, He did it because it was what He wanted to do and we give Him thanks for that.

Turn over to 2 Thessalonians for just a moment. I want you to see this in couple of different passages and to see that this electing love of God is a grounds for gratitude, it is a grounds for giving thanks. Look at 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul writing to the same group of people says:

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this that He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Undeserving as we were, God called us so that we could gain the glory of Christ, so that we might one day be in the presence of Christ, free from sin and see Him in unhindered glory and see Him for all of the glorious one that He is through all of eternity. God has chosen you for that, God is bringing you to completion for the fulfillment of His purpose in salvation. And when we think rightly we say, "Wow, God, thank you." And when this moves you properly to gratitude, all of a sudden you realize, "Wow, Not only do I not want to be the grump that I often am, I'm finding that I don't even have words that properly express gratitude for the greatness of what God has done." The English language isn't sufficient, there is no human measure by which we could give adequate thanks to God for salvation. There is no human measure by which we can give proper gratitude for the gospel. Ephesians 1:3:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...

Before creation the certainty of your salvation had been established in the councils of God. When we are rightly thinking about election, when Spirit-filled believers, informed by the scriptures are thinking rightly about election, it is not a cause of divisive theological argument, but loving praise to God. No man has a claim on God's salvation because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Look, it should not trouble you, "Is election unfair?" That question should never trouble informed Christian because it is not unfair, it is an expression of God's sovereignty. And understand something really important. When you grasp these things, it sets you on a transforming trajectory and your understanding of God. No man anywhere has ever lived on the face of this earth has ever had a claim on God's salvation. You are not entitled to it because every one of us have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God, we do not deserve His presence. We are born in to sin, we are sinners by nature and we are sinners by choice, we loved our sin before Christ moved in our lives. Un what ground would we claim to have salvation and deserve salvation as if He was obligated to give His holy salvation and open His holy heaven to ungrateful, unthankful, sinful men who despised His being. On what ground is any man think he is entitled to God's salvation? We deserve the exact opposite, we deserve His judgment and that's true of every man on the face of the earth.

And so in the doctrine of election, we do not see an unjust God acting who saved only some. We see a sovereign love that chose to save any and a sovereign love that proclaims the saving gospel to every man who will listen and call him to repentance and faith in Christ. Sovereign love is why we have Christ, sovereign love is what brought us to the forgiveness of sin, sovereign love chose to save some. We thank Him for whom He chose to save, we don't stand as His critic and as God's judge for why He didn't save all. Let our mouths be stopped and bow in the presence of sovereign love and praise Him for it.

So my Christian friend, let me hopefully help you settle something in your heart that is really foundational and transformative. We have to come back again and again and again to this basic point. Your deepest praise, your surest grounds of thanksgiving, the reason that you can be joyful has nothing to do with your present circumstances to the extent that you go up and down in the flow of your present circumstances sooner or later you are destined to be discouraged, sooner or later life catches up, right? No, we have to think independent of our circumstances. You praise God if you are a Christian for His sovereign electing love toward you, that gives you an unchanging ground for praise even when outward blessings depart from you. So, the finances collapse, the health collapses, the family collapses, whatever. I understand sorrow and sadness come with that, but the foundational point of your praise, the foundational ground of your praise never changes because it is rooted in something that is independent of this life—that's the point. And when you truly grasp and embrace and understand the sovereign grace of God in your salvation, you have an unchanging ground to praise Him that undergirds everything else—that's why we give thanks, that's why we are grateful for the gospel.

4. The Gospel Magnifies God's Word

Go back to 1 Thessalonians with me, 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1. The question is asked often, if God has chosen who will be saved, then why do we bother to preach the gospel? What's the point if God has already determined who is going to be saved. Look at 2 Thessalonians 1:5, Paul says, "We know His choice of you":

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For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of man we proved to be among you for your sake.

Paul says, I know that God chose you for salvation because when I preached the gospel to you, there was such a sense of power when I did, there was such conviction in my own heart when I preached. I know that God was working and the result of faith and work in your life is simply an extension of what I knew was happening when I spoke the word of God to you. It brings forth the centrality of the word of God in the proclamation of the gospel. Why do we preach the gospel if God has already chosen who will be saved? Let's think in the way of an analogy. God provides the harvest to the farm, but the farmer still has to plant and reap. If you went to a farming community and saw a farmer whose field was overgrown and you go in to his living room and he is watching TV, you say, "What are you doing? You got a farm, you got to sow, you got to plow, you got to plant. What are you doing sitting there?" He says, "God provides the harvest, I'm not worried about it."

You would look at him and declare him to be a fool. You can speak to him theologically saying, "Mr. Farmer, don't you understand that God works through your plowing and planting and reaping? Don't you understand that that's how He gives the harvest? What's the matter with you, you knuckle head?" No farmer would be like that. Every farmer understands that he has to plant in order to sow. Why is it that farmers are smarter than a lot of Christians? Because if you understand that, when you understand that the question of why do we preach the gospel if God has already determined who will be saved. If you understand that question is totally unnecessary. God appointed the end of the truly saved, He chose them by name and as He was choosing them, He simultaneously said, these will be saved through the proclamation of my gospel in Christ, that is the mean by which I bring them to myself. I will reveal this word, I will have this word recorded and through the proclamation of my word by my servants my elect will come to saving faith in me.

We still must preach the gospel. God appointed the end, He also appointed the means. Paul made this really clear in Romans 10:14:

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? How will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent?

(17) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Paul says, how they are going to believe? How are God's electing purpose is going to be carried out unless someone preaches the gospel to sinners. This isn't difficult. True understanding of the doctrine of election should never stifle evangelism, it should give it power.

Getting back to the grounds of gratitude, a true Christian finds in the proclamation of the gospel reasons for gratitude because a true Christian, you, who are here, you love God's word because

God's word brought salvation to you. God's word was the instrument which revealed Christ to you, it showed you in your sin and it pointed you to a savior and that savior did His work in your life and brought you to Himself. And the reason that you know these things is because God is revealed them in His word which is the grounds of the proclamation of the gospel and you give thanks to Him for that. You love His word, the word sanctifies you, the word guaranties your eternal security and you have this great affection for the scriptures. And when you see the gospel at work, you give thanks for that. The same gospel that saved you, you love to hear it again and again, you love God's word, you love the gospel because it points people to the love in your heart for the word of God.

The gospel magnifies God's word, it magnifies His specific, special revelation where the gospel of Christ revealed. Paul points to that:

Our gospel came in power and in the Holy Spirit in the full conviction.

We said that the gospel transforms lives, the gospel magnifies God's love, the gospel magnifies God's sovereignty, the gospel magnifies God's word. Our soul is just impressed with the magnification of God, the character of God, the word of God, our soul is engulfed in the greatness of these things, also:

5. The Gospel Magnifies God's Power

God's power, it is undistinguishing from His sovereignty in the sense that His sovereignty is His free will to do what He wishes and His power is the exercising of His might in order to bring those things to pass. The gospel magnifies God's power and we see this in verses 6-8. The Thessalonians' testimony was wide-spread. Paul heard of their witness, he saw their witness and it was another grounds to give thanks. Look at verse 6 with me, speaking to this church that he loved he said:

You became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. For the word of the Lord (there is the "word" again) has sounded for from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

There was such a powerful impact of the gospel upon the Thessalonians that there was an explosion of their testimony that circulated throughout the new world at that time. God's work in Thessalonica in that time and space, at that point in history, the change in their lives, the testimony of that church was an incontestable fact to those who lived at that time. Their testimony hung in the air like the blast of a trumpet. The gospel had sounded forth and there was an abiding enduring testimony that went beyond the walls of their congregation to the world around them.

Now, just as a historical matter, these kinds of things always interest me. Part of their providential reason for that explosion of their testimony was from their providential location.

Thessalonica was on a major land travel rout that people were going through constantly. Thessalonica was the sea port with access to the entire Mediterranean world. And so it was an intersection point where the world was coming in and hearing their testimony, hearing the gospel and then going back to where they came from. And so they were exposed to it when they were in Thessalonica and then their testimony went out. There was a far reaching testimony that marked this church, it was a mark of the power of God, the gospel. It is good to remind ourselves of this. The gospel transcends geographic boundaries, it transcends language, it transcends culture because to Jews and to Greek it is the power of God to salvation. There is only one gospel for all of the different peoples throughout the world and that one gospel is the power of God to salvation to all of them.

And the child of God rejoices and gives thanks when he sees his Father is magnified in the spread of the gospel, when he sees the gospel working powerfully in Eastern lands and Western lands and Northern lands and in South America and all the way around, the child of God rejoices because he sees the transcendent power of God at work in all of that. How could it be that the gospel that saved you saves someone that is in a completely different language and culture half way around the world. It is because the gospel is the power of God, it magnifies the power of God, it magnifies the truth of God and we rejoice in that.

Now the next point might seem a little counter intuitive as a grounds for thanks:

6. The Gospel Humbles Man

The gospel comes to anyone who will fear and says, you cannot save yourself. The gospel comes and tells its hearers that you must be saved by the work and righteousness of another. Jesus must save you, you cannot save yourself, and that is utterly humbling to man. True Christian rejoices in that, true Christian rejoices in that because it punctures the pride and vanity of man that we see all around us, it punctures that and shows that it is all vanity and for naught. It puts man where man belongs and elevates God where He already is. Look at verses 9-10, Paul says:

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God...

This passage is describing the conversion of the Thessalonians, it is describing their repentance. The gospel had exposed their empty worship and vanity of life. It had exposed the emptiness of their idol worship and it humbled them and powerfully moved them to repent of all that they had loved before. It humbled them and turned them in to vessels of God's glory. They rejected everything that they had known before in order to embrace Christ. It humbled them and Paul gave thanks for that. A true Christian loves that, a true Christian always has echoing in his mind:

By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of your selves, it is the gift of God. Not as a result of work, so that no one may boast.

No boasting in the true church. We call men to repent, we call them to humble themselves

before Christ, that is the way to receive salvation. And those of us that have been saved, we have been humbled by the gospel—haven't we? It has exposed our sins, it has exposed our pride, it has exposed our vanity's life, it has exposed the emptiness of our thinking. And we embrace that, we are glad for that because our former way of life was empty, it was rotten, it was vain and worthless and producing nothing. And so whenever gospel is exalted and produces that affect in others, we give thanks for it because we say, "O, thank God the true is penetrating again just like it did in my own heart."

My friend, have you repented from your own sin and received Christ? Have you abandoned all for the sake of Him? I call you to Christ today if you haven't. I offer you the forgiveness of sin if you haven't received Christ.

Final point for this morning, all too quick, I understand:

7. The Gospel Brings Final Redemption

Do you remember what the apostle Paul said:

If we have hoped in Christ in life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

When we are thinking rightly about the gospel, when we are thinking rightly about being grateful in the midst of adverse circumstances, we remember that the gospel elevates us out of this life and points us to the realm yet to come. We are only in a tiny little narthex here, the glorious cathedral of God's glory is yet to be revealed to us, is yet to be brought to us. Look at verse 10 here, Paul tells them:

...you turned from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

There is a coming day of judgment upon this world that God will usher in where He will unleash the fury of His power, the fury of His settled opposition to sin will be shown and judgment will be brought and this world will be brought to an end and sinners who will continue to refuse Him will be cast in to hell forever.

What the gospel tells us is that you as a believer in Christ have been rescued from that. You and I are waiting for Christ to come and we have no fear of that coming judgment because our strong and powerful savior the Lord Jesus, as part of His mission, as part of His commitment to His people, will rescue us from that wrath to come and we have no fear. He will bring us to glory and we will be at peace. We wait for Him with patience and with trust. We wait for Him in confidence that He will do His promised will in us.

2 Thessalonians 1:9, just jot the reference down. Again, echoing this theme of final redemption, he says:

These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marbled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

In that day of judgment, when judgment comes, you and I as Christians are going to be separate from it rather than being at the receiving end of God's wrath, we are going to be marveling at the glory of Christ, that is our final redemption, that is our final hope, that is why we are grateful here and now. We know the true and living God now and give thanks and we look to the future of eternity and say, we are going to be there, rescued from wrath, marveling at Christ, seeing Him face to face. And we somehow wrap our minds around that as best as we can and then we come back to where you are sitting right now, right today at this very moment. And in your heart, you remember all these things and you say, "God, thank you for the gospel. I am grateful to you for what you have done for me."

Let's pray. Father, we look at all that the gospel has revealed to us. We look at all that the gospel has delivered us from. We look at all that gospel promises yet to be and we give you thanks. Thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you for your eternal electing love. Thank you for your sustaining grace. Thank you for final redemption that is yet to come.

Father, for these precious brothers and sisters in Christ before me now, some going through very deep water, I pray that the hope of the gospel, the truth of the gospel and the love of Christ would settle in their hearts an ever deepening sense of gratitude toward you that would sustain them through the trials of this life.

And for those of us that are seeing your external blessing all around us Father, we have all the more reason to give thanks. Whatever end of the spectrum Father, gratitude is the proper response of our hearts and gratitude is what we give to you now. We bless your name as your people. In Jesus' name. Amen.